

A Collection of Unusual World Records By RON JONES

*shared
victory*





Tallest inner tube sandwich

The World Record for the tallest inner tube sandwich is seven people compacted in between seven inner tubes. To try this record, place an inner tube on the ground. That's easy. Now lay a willing person, preferably someone who is large, across the inner tube. It works best to lie face down, with your belly snuggled into the center of the tube. Now you've got the idea. One tube followed by a person, followed by another tube and another person, and so on. It's all right to have lots of help in the stacking process. In fact, that's sometimes the best job. Don't be afraid to recruit passersby to join in your quest. All they have to do is lie on a tube. Who knows—they might be a part of a World Record. That is, if they can keep from laughing.







most people standing on an inner tube

Have you ever stood on an inner tube? It's not easy. You push down with one foot and the air in the tube rushes around to push up your other foot. You push harder, and the washing motion of air returns the favor. You giggle and it giggles. When a friend stands on the tube with you, the air currents go every which way. And when three people try to stand on an inner tube, the only way to remain in balance is to hold on to each other and "ride out" the wiggling surface. The more people added to this ring of air, the more tides are created. Feel with your feet. Bend your legs. Hold on to your neighbor. Don't pull each other over. Hold on, that's the secret.

The current World Record for People Standing on an Inner Tube is fifteen. Of course, part of this record is based on finding a large inner tube. And then some friends willing to dance on rubber.







highest inner tube climb

I must admit that I worried about this event. In fact, I thought the highest pile of tires a person could climb onto and stand on would be three or four. What I didn't take into consideration was the power of a group of people pressed around a pile of inner tubes. People squeezed against the tubes serve to stabilize the climbing platform. They also offer the hand grasps and push-off points that allow a climber to reach and stand on a pile of wobbling inner tubes. Perhaps most important of all, the press of friends offers the encouragement and final push necessary for a climber trying to straddle the top of the tube mountain.

The optimal rubber mountain for climbing is a stack of eight inner tubes. Critical for the climber is a circle of friends offering their support as a climbing aid and safety net.

For climbers who have trouble scrambling over the backs of their friends, there is the famous volcano climbing technique. To initiate this technique the climber starts inside the pile of tubes. (Stand the climber and drop the tubes around this person.) The climber now has a vertical soft ladder to use in wedging his or her body upward.

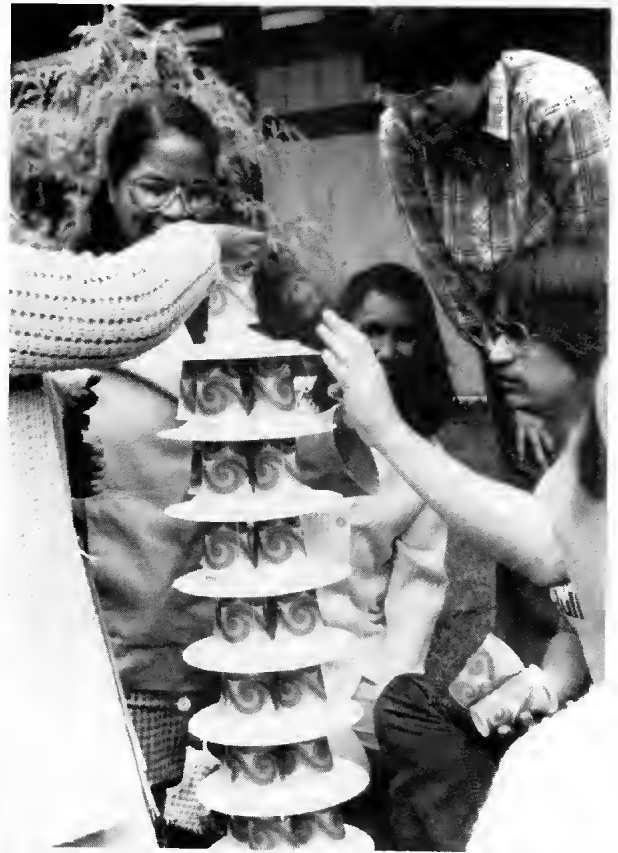




tallest paper cup tower

The World's Tallest Paper Cup Tower is unknown. This doesn't mean that effort is lacking. Or ingenuity. Or teamwork. It's paper cups and plates. They keep running out. Some recorded accomplishments are paper cup towers of twenty-six feet, thirty-one feet three inches, and thirty-four feet eight inches.

I should warn you that one enterprising group of tower builders deferred the bearing wall technique, or "hold it" plan, in favor of taping some cups to the ceiling. They worked their way down—a distance of thirty-six feet. It's interesting to note that other builders faced with this upside-down phenomenon just kept right on building. It seems the building might be more enjoyable than reaching some ultimate height.











largest skateboard

Well, World's Largest Skateboard might be an exaggeration. Actually the wheeled device shown here came from the janitor's storage area. Look closely—I'm sure your school or church has one of the wheeled wonders (often called a dolly). They are used to carry and store tables or chairs. They work in a similar fashion to transport people. Of course, the people have to figure out how to propel and steer these giant skateboards. That's what this World Record is all about—finding out how many people can work together to move from point A to point B.







first human pinball game

The First Human Pinball Game can be as big as you want. To start, select a playing field or large indoor room. Now, place some inner tubes or cardboard boxes on the playing surface. The tubes and boxes serve as targets. You are almost ready to play. All you need are the cushions that bounce the ball around the board and the ball itself. People make great cushions. Give each player a place to stand or sit and inform them it's their job to bounce the ball into a target using their hips, feet, forehead, butt, knee, toe, chest, shoulder, or hands. You might want to limit the play to the use of legs or some such body part. The pinball in this game is the largest balloon you can find. The bigger the better.

To put the balloon in play, let several people serve as "flippers." The flippers can move to nit the balloon and keep it in play. Points are scored every time the flippers and cushions work a balloon into a target tube or box. It's also fun to see just how long the fippers and cushions can work together to keep the balloon moving. The longest recored play of a balloon (without the balloon touching the ground) in Human Pinball is twenty-three minutes nineteen seconds.







largest pinball machine

Wanted: a device to teach focusing and the underhand delivery of a ball.

Wanted: something that a group could make from scrap and enjoy playing.

Wanted: an activity for a rainy day.

The solution to this problem was a giant pinball machine. The board for this machine can be plywood or cardboard. To provide a course for the ball, tack down some wood strips. Coffee cans and the like, taped onto the playing surface, make wonderful targets. Now all you have to add are some bells, clankers, a toilet plunger, and of course a couple of American flags. In Giant Pinball the traditional metal spheres are replaced by a sack of golf balls. Golf balls are easy to roll and easy to find. To play, simply lay your game board on a slant and start rolling golf balls up the designated path. The rolling golf ball will wend its way down the slant of the board—through the obstacles, and with luck, into a waiting coffee can.

















first slant ball game

The World's First Slant Ball Game started by accident. A segment of a cardboard pinball game was left on the grass. This sheet of cardboard, with its various coffee can attachments, attracted immediate attention. Michael Paul couldn't resist picking up one end and Debbie grabbed the other. Someone put a tennis ball in the center of this cardboard sheet. When Debbie lifted her end of the cardboard the ball raced toward Michael. To halt its progress and send it back, he lifted his end higher. They discovered they could roll the ball back and forth. And then side to side. Once directions and teamwork were established, they could gently guide the ball into and out of the coffee cans and strawberry baskets attached to the cardboard. Michael Paul declared, "This isn't basketball." Debbie named it "Slant Ball."







most catches of a tennis ball with a fish net

If you think it's fun throwing balls at a stationary barrel, then consider the prospects of throwing at a target that moves to "swoop up" your throw. It takes two or more people to play Fish Net. The object is to see how many tennis balls can be thrown and caught in a fish net. Players can stand far apart or on opposite sides of a volleyball net or even back to back. There can be more than one person throwing balls to the catcher with the fish net. The throwers can be blindfolded and asked to throw to a sound-producing catcher.

One accomplishment you might note is a record 163 catches without a miss. In this record attempt the throwers alternated throwing arms and bounced the ball to the catcher.









most tennis balls stuffed in a T-shirt

One day I couldn't find the fish net. There I was, standing with a box of tennis balls, holding a lesson plan that called for throwing and catching—surrounded by a group of young adults ready to play Fish Net. When I asked if anyone had seen the fish net, everyone answered. They had all seen it in a different place.

I was about to suggest a game of baseball when Harvey Lai offered, "Use my T-shirt." I'm not sure he had the following exploit in mind. As Harvey was attempting to take off his T-shirt, Sal took up Harvey's offer. Sal ran over to Harvey and stuffed a tennis ball into the neck opening. The ball wiggled down the inside of the T-shirt, touching every "tickle bone" in Harvey's body. Well, I had always talked about making up games, and here was the silliest game imaginable—stuffing a T-shirt with as many tennis balls as fabric would allow. It was a neat game. No, neat is not the word. It was an energetic game of pushing, squeezing, helping, laughing, pushing, squeezing, helping, laughing, rolling on the ground. We played for an hour. Everyone had a turn. Boys paraded tennis ball breasts and girls flaunted tennis ball muscles. Yes, there is great technique and etiquette even in the game of stuff the tennis ball. Try it!

Oh, I almost forgot. The record number of tennis balls stuffed into one T-shirt (in a minute or so of play) is 126. The T-shirt was a size large Fruit of the Loom.



longest human conveyor belt

The World's Longest Human Conveyor Belt was created when the World's Largest Human Pyramid collapsed. There we were, lying on the stage bemoaning and laughing about our flattened pyramid. Then someone passed a loose shoe to the person next to him, who passed it in turn to the next person, who—not wanting a lost tennis shoe—continued to pass it on. That's how it started. Joe Azzaro, who was lying at the other end of the stage, saw what was happening and wanted to help. So he started a tube pass from his end. Some people just bumped the inner tube along, others passed it with a loop kick, and some bobbed it with the back of their heads. From this point the game was formalized. We tried passing things along our human conveyor belt using no hands, elbows only, left legs only, and so forth. We passed all sorts of things, from inner tubes, to hats, to cardboard boxes, ice cubes, balloons, noises, and teammates. We tried standing up in a spread-leg posture, passing things between our legs (like a center hiking a football). And we tried passing items standing shoulder to shoulder. But the best fun of all and the best exercise in body-part differentiation and movement was that initial human conveyor belt in which all the players were lying flat on the ground. Now, if I could just find my tennis shoe. . .







steadiest ladder acrobat

Tom Carrol volunteers at the Recreation Center swimming pool. Tom is also a division chief of the San Francisco Fire Department. Since my desk is out by the pool, Tom and I got into a nodding relationship. One day I asked Tom if I could buy or borrow a ladder from the fire department. I had some ideas that a ladder with straight rails and regularly spaced rungs might be helpful in teaching stroke victims to walk. Tom smiled at my request to buy a fire ladder. "Do you know," he said, "San Francisco is one of the last fire departments to make its own ladders. They are made from selected woods by a craftsman who has been making our ladders for thirty years. You couldn't buy a ladder if you wanted! We used to pike those ladders—holding them for climbers. That's not easy—a good ladder weighs 500 pounds."

Two weeks later Tom drove out to the center in a fire engine. He left behind four ladders. I found that they were valuable in walk therapy, but something else stuck in my mind—the idea of men lifting and piking the ladders. People holding the ladder would be using muscle power to place the ladder in position and then support a fellow climber. An intricate balance act between people. I liked the idea and now had the ladders to try it out.











fastest wheel chair car

The idea for building "wheelchair cars" came about one morning when Ellie and Linda arrived at work driving brand new automobiles. There is that special smell and look of a new car that defies human avoidance. Everyone, staff and participants alike, just had to go out into the parking lot and rub and sniff and poke those shiny machines with paper license plates. When it comes to new cars we're like dogs in heat.

Transfixed by the aura of chrome and the memory of building countless soap-box cars, I mumbled, "I'd sure like to build me one of those." Roy Cook heard me. And so did Sal. Sal asked, "Can we?" When I replied, "Can we what?" Sal continued, "Can we build one like that?" That's how it started. The next day the Merced Motor Works, known at the Recreation Center as the group of kids called Super Stars, began construction of not one, but three automobiles.

To begin, we made a list of the things that belong on a car. The list went something like this:

- RADIO
- ASHTRAY
- SEATS
- WINDSHIELD WIPERS
- RADIO
- GAS CAP
- START-UP KEY
- ENGINE
- MIRROR
- TWO LIGHTS
- RADIO
- LICENSE PLATE
- RADIO

It was obvious our car would have a radio. Maybe three radios!





Since the only wheels available at the Center came on wheelchairs, I decided it would be easy just to build our car around the existing chair frame. How exactly that might happen was still a mystery. Along with a box of car parts, I carted into the classroom an array of hammers, pliers, staple guns, wire, and cardboard tubing. Construction was trial and error.

Wood slats and cardboard tubing turned out to be too stiff and unworkable as framing. They had to be discarded. And coat hangers, while malleable, didn't hold their shape under the stress of building (builders sitting or leaning on the frame during construction).

Finally the perfect frame material was discovered, in the form of Hoola Hoops and bamboo plant stakes. The circular shape of the Hoola Hoop was ideal for fixing onto the chair and, when reinforced with plant stakes, the two materials worked together to give the frame shapely style and strength. The hoops and stakes were affixed to the wheelchair with duct tape. In fact, everything on each wheelchair car was connected to everything else with duct tape. Often even the builders were affixed to the duct tape, which was affixed to some car part, which was affixed to another builder. Only when someone moved would we realize we were somehow taped to the car we were building.

Once the frame was in place it was covered with cardboard. The cardboard was then painted a racy color. For detail work, a dashboard (with radio) was constructed, as well as windshield, exhaust pipes, bumpers, headlights, and roll bar. A finishing touch given to each car was a patchwork of racing stickers and personalized license plate.

A second car was constructed from papier mache. A covering of chicken wire was tied to the Hoola Hoop/bamboo stake frame. Then the chicken wire was coated with shredded paper towels dunked in a paste of glue, water, and flour. The dried



surface was then given the extras—cushions, windshield, air funnel, and so on.

The third car was built entirely of cardboard. The cardboard was cut from boxes into shapes that resembled the front and rear body of a car. We could then take these modular parts and instantaneously transform any wheelchair into a car. Of course we did need some duct tape to hold the cardboard in place.

The wheelchair cars served more purpose than I originally considered. They

provided an excellent device for studying the automobile. And of course they became wonderful artistic expressions. And surprises. Roy Cook, for instance, built the detailed dashboard in the first car. He did it by himself. He decided where the radio would go and figured out how the dashboard could have a built-in ashtray.

Of course once the cars were constructed they allowed us to have races and a driving school consisting of a driving course. The cars also became aids in improving motor coordination and teaching left and right, stop and go. Perhaps most important of all was the manner in which the cars exercised our imagination. Colleen Maxwell showed me that.

Colleen is a young girl approaching womanhood. She is still a girl and yet she is already a woman. And then she is a girl again. Colleen is restricted to a wheelchair. She was not part of the group that built the cars, but if there is anything happening at the Center, Colleen will find out. Sure enough, I found her one afternoon, wheeling around one of the partially made cars. She didn't know what to think of that sleek-looking car. Her thinking ran out her finger tips. Her hands touched the wheels. They were familiar. But they also turned on the radio in the cab of the chair. That didn't fit. She walked her fingers down the nose of the car. That didn't fit either. Finally she asked, "Can I ride that?" I said, "Sure, but it's just a wheelchair." I swallowed the just. She would have none of my excuses. "I want to sit in it, is that okay?"

I lifted Colleen and put her in the car. Then I asked, "Where are you going?" The young woman had become a girl again. She fiddled with the instruments on the dashboard, then she turned to me and said—in a woman's voice—"Los Angeles."



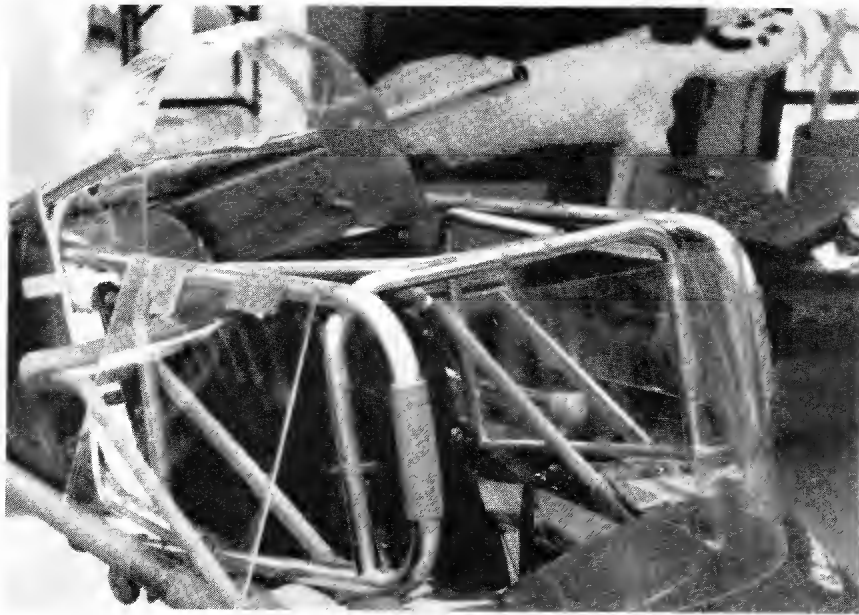


the great wheelchair race

After months of preparation, the day for the big race arrived. All three cars were given final touches. Each car had taken on a distinct personality and a following. The black car, with its egg-carton grill and roll bar, was dubbed "The Mean Machine." The windshield on The Mean Machine tilted rakishly over an elaborate array of dashboard dials and buttons. This was Roy Cook's car. He had labored for hours on the dashboard and supervised the placement of foam trim in the cab of the car and positioning of the dual exhaust pipes. Roy would sit in the car during its construction. In fact, we had a hard time getting him out of the car. Roy, along with most of the staff and race groupies, felt the black car might be the fastest. It was made from an antique wheelchair and the oversized wheels and undercarriage of springs added to the fearsome look. Of course, one other observation quickly swept through the waiting crowd—The Mean Machine was a car without brakes.

An uncommon companion to the menacing look of the black car was the papier mache car called "Pumpkin." Pumpkin was all curves and drips. This car was so soft looking that while it was parked in the garage, several birds had tried to use it as a nest; that accounts for the drips. The birds had pecked away at the paper, causing the car to slowly unravel. Every time the car moved, bits and pieces of it would fall to the ground, leaving a trail of paper and tape.

The main competition for the black car took form in the red car. The red car had windows that opened and closed in a similar fashion to the gull door on an old Mercedes. It also had a plexiglass wind-



shield that curved around the driver and a slanting nose that wedged to the ground. Of all the cars, this was the only machine that was given eyes and a female name—Samantha. Because it was the final car assembled, Samantha had one important technological advantage over the other prototypes; the body of the red car was cardboard, strapped onto tubular “walkers.” The beauty of this tubular construction was that the canopy and body of car could be pulled off. This gave the driver easy access to the cockpit of the car—something that hadn’t dawned on us until the third car. In fact, the entire question of getting into and out of the finished cars had not been raised prior to the race. It was a problem we would have to solve by doing.

So now it was time. The three cars were carefully nudged to the starting line. The Mean Machine had to be held in place. Pieces of stuff fell off the Pumpkin. Samatha’s red nose was touching the ground.

The drivers paced nervously. Each racer had manufactured a license plate for his car and a driver’s license for his pocket. The plates had to be affixed to the cars and the licenses examined. Once this was completed, each driver was carefully fitted with eye goggles and a racing cap, courtesy of the swimming pool staff. Hands rubbed together, then pulled at the caps. Goggles fogged and had to be cleaned. A checkered flag waved for attention. Banners lining the race course flapped. Someone turned on a hand-held radio. That’s all we needed. It was 1956 and a local drag race was about to begin.

Everyone wanted to be first. The vulnerability of the cars suddenly froze my thoughts. All I could think about was the fragile construction of the cars. All that held them together was tape, hoola hoops, and plant stakes. Who had I been, kidding? These wheelchairs weren’t racing cars; they were at best pieces of art. Coats of paper and tape incapable of

supporting uncontrolled bodies—they were mirages, nothing more.

The black car gave the illusion of having lots of room for the driver, but to get into the car, the driver would have to crawl into the seat by ducking under the front end. As for the red car, the pop-top opened up the cab of the car, but the driver would still have to be lifted into the seat. The same was true for the paper car. They simply couldn’t stand the punishment of stiff bodies being wrenched into them. What if we only get one race and can’t get the drivers out of the cars? What if we can’t even get the drivers into the cars for one race? And why am I worrying about the cars and not the people who want to ride in them? I was cursing myself for not considering the difficulties of getting drivers into the wheelchairs when, to my surprise, the problem was being solved without me.

Bodies were being lifted into the air and deposited in the driver’s seat of each car. The sight reminded me of white-coated attendants pushing and guiding astronauts into their space capsules. This act of body mechanics could not have been predicted or practiced. Spastic and heavy bodies were moved like puppets by dozens of extra hands. Feet unaccustomed to leaving the ground were cranked upward. Bodies that normally stagger for balance and ward off any assistance were accepting a basket of supporting arms. Focus that usually wanders was fixed on one task, getting drivers into the cars. There was no collapsing of cars or falling bodies. There was only the overwhelming effort to get into those cars. I had forgotten that illusions are nothing but dreams. And dreams are the greatest reality of all. The cars had become real. They had windows and radios, dials and license plates, and everything else that makes a car. They were real. Real cars waiting to be driven by real race drivers.

Once in the cars, the drivers responded to the task. Faces became a rainbow of





emotion. Worried frowns evaporated into smiles that turned to looks of confidence, only to return to frowns. This was the big race. Gauges had to be checked and tickled. The ashtrays had to be inspected. Keys to start the cars had to be fished from rumpled pockets. And don't forget to wave goodbye. My God, all the racers are waving goodbye. And their fans are returning the gesture. It's mad and wonderful.

The checkered flag is waving, not so much to start the cars, but to salute them. It doesn't matter. The race is started without an announcement. Wheels turn. Arms arch to push the wheels faster. It's a sunny day and there is racing on Main Street. The Mean Machine lurches down the track like a California low rider. The springs cause it to bounce with each arm thrust. The red car is much smoother and faster. The Pumpkin moves in a side-to-side fashion that shakes loose a trail of laughter and paper droppings.

Down and back the cars race, stopping only for a change of drivers. Most starts are snake-like cars swerving to the alternating arm pushes. At the turn, the cars often end up facing each other, causing instant panic. Frantic turning. Yelling. Backing up. Turning around. Pushing with one hand. Backing up. Then straight again. Back to the starting line. Both arms now working in unison. One hundred miles an hour. Or faster. Racing as fast as you can. Finishing in a cloud of applause and drivers waiting to go again! Within minutes of the race, you couldn't tell who was racing whom. There were just cars and people going every which way.

If there was a race of classic proportions, it came at the end of the afternoon. All but two drivers had raced. Now it was their turn. It was Roy Cook versus Joey Day. Now, Roy had spent the entire afternoon patiently waiting for his chance to drive. He inspected his black car after each run. Like a finicky mechanic, he fiddled with the windshield and polished the gauges of the resting car. Several



times, I held him from getting into the car. I knew once he got in, we could never get him out. Finally it was his turn. Roy was lifted into the driver's seat. He was ready.

If Roy was the most eager of drivers, then Joey, his racing companion, would have to be considered the most reluctant driver. Joey had followed the races from a careful distance. Always in a slow walk, he circled the drivers getting into and out of the cars. During the races, he walked nervously down the length of the track and back. Always when called upon to take a turn, he turned and walked away. Now this was his last chance.

I wasn't sure what Joey would do. I called. My words pulled him like a lasso to the red car. He stared, motionless, for just a second, then turned and walked away. His walk was a curving circle that brought him back to the side of the car. He was petting the car with one hand and gently rolling the wheel with the other hand when Roy demanded, "Come on!" The call broke Joey's fixation and, instead of turning away from the car, he turned right into it.

This surprise bump led to another surprise. Joey allowed us to lift him into the cab of the car. At least I think he allowed us to pick him up and carefully position him in the driver's seat. Joey's head was nodding yes and a smile creased his face, but his body wasn't agreeing with the nod. He was rigid. Each joint had to be bent into the final sitting position. And even when seated, we couldn't get his arms to fold over the chair. Both arms stuck out like the wings of an airplane. In all the months of car building and practice sessions using arm movements to propel the cars, Joey had been absent. Now this strange day of racing. Cars out of nowhere. And friends wearing water goggles and driving these contraptions just like on television. It must have been frightening.

Frightening or not, Roy was off. His arms swung back and forth in a powerful windmill fashion. The black car lurched

up and down with each arm stroke. Sensing a one-sided race, everyone began to yell instructions to the stunned Joey. Joey just sat there, his arms straight out. The yells got louder and so did the mimicking and coaching from the sidelines. "Use your arms!" "Push the wheels with your hands!"

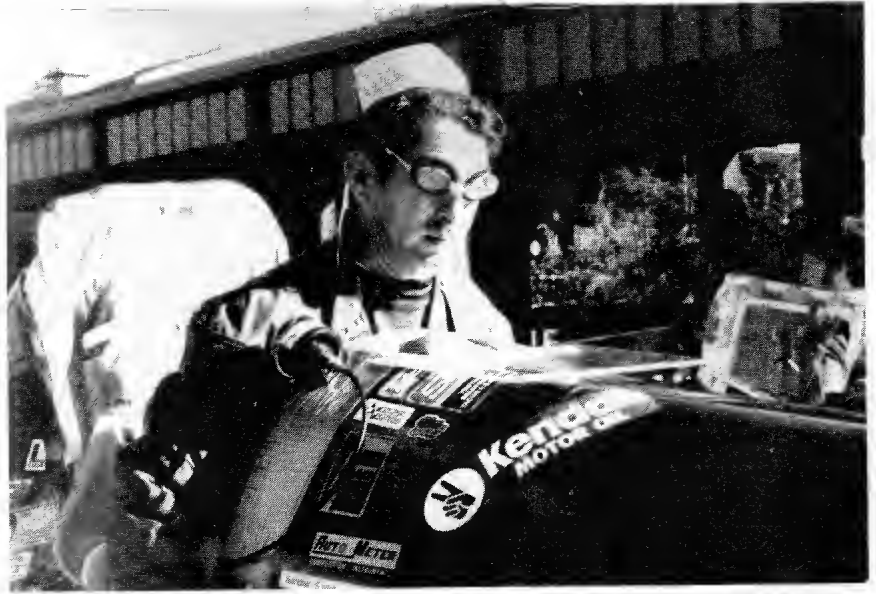
Slowly Joey began to move, and then to pick up speed. His arms, however, were still sticking straight out the windows like airfoils. The car was moving, but no one could figure out how. The instructions became more animated. "Use your arms!" "Reach down and turn the wheel!"

Joey was now gliding faster and faster with his unseen source of power. He was alongside Roy and past him. His arms were now waving up and down like a sea gull trying to take flight. When Joey spun his car in a pirouette and sped toward the finish, everyone came to a collective discovery. Joey was using his legs. In all our practice of using the arms, in all our shouting to Joey about the proper way to use a wheelchair, we had all missed an obvious means to propel the cars—the feet. Joey was sitting in the chair, but his feet were running. The fastest wheelchair car belonged to the driver with the sense to use his feet.

For Joey, the race ended in a gale of enthusiasm and wonder. Why hadn't someone tried this before? Joey was lifted from his car in total triumph. His arms were still sticking straight out.

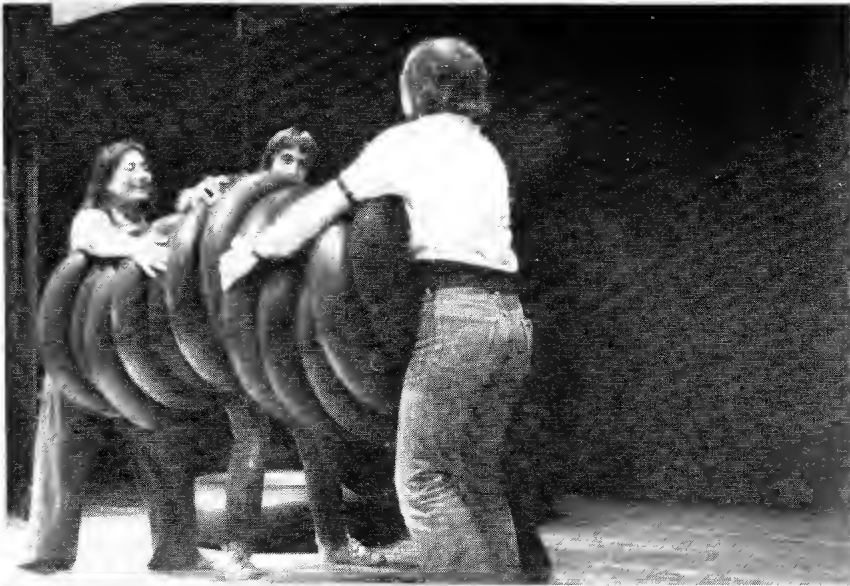
For Roy, the race was not over. He nonchalantly wheeled past us and toward the storage garage. He tooted his horn to announce his passage. For the next three hours, Roy drove his car around the Center. Only when he had parked his car and checked the oil did he agree that the race was over.













longest inner tube hug

Start with two people facing each other—now place an inner tube between them and ask them to hold the tube. That's easy. Now place a second inner tube between the two holders. That's easy. Now squeeze a third tube and a fourth and a fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth... Yes, the people "book ends" have a jellied mass they must try to hold and balance. Belly pushing is an apt description of the technique used to hold more than six inner tubes.

The World Record for greatest number of inner tubes supported accordion style between two people is seventeen. The World Record for the Longest Hug using one inner tube as a chaperon is nine seconds. Both these records are extremely vulnerable to the East Germans and other Olympic contenders.



longest portable slide



The World's Longest Portable Slide lives a dual life. For most of the year this slide is stored in the janitor's closet. It's a plastic "floor protector," 160 feet long by 2 feet wide. The topside of this plastic strip is smooth, while the underside is studded with tiny plastic thorns. According to John Taylor this "runner" was used once when the pool was dedicated. "It's kind of a long welcome mat." I asked John if I could use the plastic roll. He said "Sure," followed by, "What did you have in mind for the thing?" I put one hand in the air and traced a downward course like a pilot describing the flight of a falling airplane.

From that moment, the long plastic sheet was given another life. When not in use on the ground for some ceremonial occasion or rolled up in the back of the closet, the roll of plastic becomes Super Slide. In fact, for most of the year this roll of plastic is in use as the World's Longest Portable Slide. It's a perfect outdoor slide. It can be thrown down any grass incline, sand dune, or hillside and you have an "instant" 160-foot slide. Of course you can select hills with bumps, fast hills, slow hills, whatever. The plastic forms to the surface. The barbs hold it in place as bodies careen downward. And struggle back up to go again. And again.

Just as the runner is a perfect outdoor slide, upturned tables and mats layed against stairs make excellent indoor slides. Once you have a slide you have an invitation to a great many physical feats. The record for the most people on a slide at one time is fifteen. This says something about the attraction of slides and the "other life" of things called runners, tables, and stairs.



fastest wax paper slide

The table slide was sticky, so Pam invaded the kitchen and returned with a box of wax paper. Well, that quickly solved the slide problem. It also gave Pam an idea. She sat Ray on the wax paper and started pulling him. Of course Mary also wanted to be pulled. And so did Marrietta. And Monica. The World's First Wax Paper Train was formed. Ray held on to Mary, who held on to Marrietta, who held on to Monica. Of course Pam and I rationalized that this was a lesson in cooperation. It was also just a lot of waxed fun.





most tube-ups

So you want to do a Tube-Up. It's not easy! A Tube-Up is something you can't do by yourself. And it takes a lot of arm and leg strength. But more than a group effort or strength move, a Tube-Up requires a special sensitivity—a give and take—a subtle ability of the players to sense when to pull. And how hard to pull. If you pull too hard, you will yank the players opposite you off their feet and right on top of you. If you pull too lightly, you won't get up. Only with a unified and balanced pull can several people work together to execute a Tube-Up. You still want to try? It looks easy. But, remember, I warned you.

To perform a Tube-Up have several players sit facing an inner tube. Each player should sit in a crouched position with his or her feet flat on the floor against the outer bulge of the inner tube. On a signal the players grab the inner tube with both hands and pull. An instant tug-of-war ensues, a tug-of-war in which no one person can win. Everyone must work together—feeling the right moment and right amount of tension that will allow the group to pull itself to a standing position. The group moving from sitting position to standing position constitutes a successful Tube-Up. The record number of Tube-Ups by a group of five players is fourteen consecutive Tube-Ups. They could have continued but others wanted to try this graceful act. And those who had performed the Tube-Up wanted to coach.





longest roll of an individual inside a bunch of inner tubes

The World's Record for Longest Roll of an Individual Inside a Bunch of Inner Tubes is eighty-three feet nine inches. That's the length of the grass area at the site of this record attempt.

To try this record on your own patch of lawn, simply surround a standing "rider" with inner tubes—then tilt the rider and tubes over and begin pushing. The trick to inner tube riding is to have enough pushers so that each tube rolls at about the same speed. Another concern is a person inside the tubes who enjoys rolling over and over and over and doesn't get sick.



most uses of a bicycle inner tube

I tied three bicycle inner tubes together to form a single loop. When I showed this rubber snake to an adult "exercise group" they laughed and asked, "What the heck are you giving us now?" Chuck quipped, "At least it's not another exercycle—that last one almost killed me!" Velma had another explanation for the strange inner tube, "Ron, are you into bondage?" She emphasized the bondage. After a great deal of speculation about x-rated exercise, I explained my intention for the inner tubes. "No, I don't plan on lassoing Chuck to the exercycle or playing Chinese jump rope—I don't even know how the tube might be used—but I have a feeling it can be helpful and maybe a lot of fun." Velma, or maybe it was Frances or Ellie, continued to tease, "We know all you want is our bodies."

If you get the sense that the adult exercise group is a great pleasure and that their physical handicaps have not dulled their intellect or sexuality, then come along with me. I want to show and tell you about the wonders of a "Rubber Gymnasium." Is wonders too big a description? No. Please look closely at what follows. This set of exercises with an inner tube is the creation of individuals working together to improve their health. These individuals did not have an expensive Universal Gym, or weight set, or rings, or pulleys, or any of that muscle apparatus advertised on television for sixty-four dollars. What they had to work



with was much greater than all that fancy chrome. They had each other and a knotted inner tube.

What they have created with this bicycle tubing is the most important idea in this book. Important because it works, it involves people, uses their ideas, adapts to their needs, and doesn't require a grant or bank robbery to implement. All you need to get started is a few used inner tubes, usually available for the asking at your local bike shop.

Please, do me a favor. Put down this book and take a short visit to your nearest bike shop. Ask them for a few old inner tubes. Cut them into long strands and then knot them together into a circle. Now get some friends and begin to play with the tubing as a way to stretch and build muscles—improve range of motion—and touch.

If you have begun to experiment with an inner tube tugged by a group of people, you will enjoy and appreciate the following description of activities. You will also know that this description is very limited. If you have not played with an inner tube, then I hope the following description will serve to invite that pleasure and discovery.

The start of our play with an inner tube was very hesitant. Everyone approached the tube as if it were a tug-of-war rope. And the only purpose of the tubing was to pull the thing away from your neighbor. The larger people strode to the tubing and presented a kind of "king of the inner tube" presence. Those in wheelchairs were quickly excluded from the play. In a

few minutes the tubing was dropped. No one wanted to play or fight over an inner tube. It sat unused in the middle of the floor. And it was almost forgotten. Then, I don't know just how it happened, someone rolled over the coiled tube. It was picked up again—this time by two people and then a third—all in wheelchairs. They began to gently pull and roll the inner tube, much like people turning yarn around outstretched arms. When their movement of the tubing caught the attention of others, the newcomers were invited to play only if they drew up chairs. So a circle of chairs formed around the stretched inner tube. I took up a chair and joined the group.

Each person in the circle took hold of the inner tube. It delightfully flexed to our various grasps. It was as if we were instantly flexed in some great spider web. I was sensitive to the movement of the person sitting next to me and could even feel a ripple effect of the person sitting opposite me. If I moved my arms up the people around me were forced into an upward swing. If I resisted them I benefited from their tension and had to work harder.

During the next sixteen months we met weekly to experiment and play with the inner tube as an exercise tool. Following our initial experience we always sat in a circle. The exercise group consisted of eight to twelve people. If there were more we simply added another length of inner tube. Three inner tubes tied together had sufficient buoyancy and resistance for small groups. (Four inner tubes tied together proved sufficient for groups as large as fifty.) Being linked together by a spring-like ribbon, we had to work together—listen to each other's suggestions, try movements that had never been done, take chances, celebrate our success and laugh at our surprises. There were no manuals to follow or preconceived lesson plans. So we paid attention to each other and played.



most row rows

Usually it was a simple suggestion that got us moving. For example, Chuck would direct us to move our hands inward and then back. A syncopated movement would take hold of the inner tube. In and out it would flow. Its rhythmic tide served to smooth out the jerky or spastic movement of unused arms. Candy accompanied this cadence with a chorus of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Arthur would smile. It was hard for Arthur to keep his weak hand on the tube. But he smiled. Maybe we looked silly, all moving like some great accordion. Or maybe the movement forced him to move his head. It was worth a smile for whatever reason. We had our first exercise called "row, row, row your boat." The record number of Most Row Rows is thirty-seven. I don't know if the ending was a case of physical exhaustion or tedium with the song.

most finger pulls

Many discoveries with our "rubber gymnasium" came about while someone was simply playing with the elasticity in the tubing. All of a sudden the movement would draw the group's attention and we'd try to duplicate the feat. This is the way Frances shared her piano exercise with the group. With her thumb and first finger of both hands, Frances pinched the inner tube, then tried to separate or spread the distance between her hands. Having accomplished this, she relaxed her pull and squeezed the tube with the thumb and second finger. And once again she pulled her hands away from each other. Before she could try the thumb and third finger pull, we were all doing what Velma labeled Most Finger Pulls.

Always during and after an exercise we would talk about the experience. "That really works my fingers." "I didn't realize how little feeling I have in that third finger." "Did you know that I once played piano?" "What do I do with the strongest fingers in town?" Our conversations of exercise often took us into important concerns and new discoveries about each other—our strengths and our lives together.



most sky touches

Ellie dubbed this exercise the Sky Touch. We were strung together trying to touch the floor, then our knees, then our chest—when Ellie went for the sky. We had to follow, crooked arms and all. The tube shivered as we pushed our arms over our heads. Some held on, barely able to keep a grasp on the tube. Others pushed for them. And the best suggestion of all was made by Herman. “Go ahead if your hand needs help—grab it with the good one—it’s all right to help yourself.” When Arthur reached for his frozen hand and began to pry it free, Herman added, “But I didn’t say stop, I said make that weak hand work—push with both hands.” The record for Most Sky Touches is fifteen. This seemed like a good number to stop at or repeat at a later time.

most arm curls

Momma Joe is the inventor of Arm Curls. For an inner tube Arm Curl you grip the rubber with your knuckles under and the palm of your hand facing upward. Then, keeping your elbow tucked close to your body, curl your arm toward your chin. The Most Arm Curls performed by a group is forty-three—we simply got carried away one day. The best number to do is around ten. Do them slowly and use your imagination to tell your arms that they are curling one hundred pounds. Or as Momma Joe would say, “I’m catching me a big fish!”

most rubber punches

Push one arm forward and pull the other arm back. Then punch again, throwing the back hand forward. That’s it. Punch and pull. Punch. The arms move counter to each other. One arm forward, the other back. Muhammad Ali, here we come. There is no record for Most Rubber Punches. No one was counting. We punch until someone says enough.





most reach and grabs

This is perhaps the most enjoyable of our rubber gymnastic events. We all scoot our chairs back so the tubing is taut. Then, on a signal, we begin to reach and grab the tube. Reach and grab. Reach and grab. The tubing begins to bounce, making it harder to grasp. Reach and grab, faster and faster. Now, about this time there is a mathematical probability that several people sitting close together will hit a moment when they all have their hands off the tube. In this microsecond the tube would be set free and catapult across the circle into the lap of the other players. If you have a math wizard in your group, you might calculate the probability of such an occurrence. If you don't want to calculate this with numbers, then I suggest a little game of reach and grab. It's great for concentration and using the hands, but look out for that micromovement. How long can your group play reach and grab and at what speed before—twang! The current World Record for Reach and Grab by eight people moving as fast as they can is three minutes.





most wrist curls

Everyone grab the tube and begin rolling or twisting it. That's it, roll the rubber, twist it tighter and tighter. Make those wrists work. Once you have the tubing wound tightly you can reverse the process. Use your wrists to unwind the knotted tubing.

most rubber kicks

If you sweep the tube around one of your feet you are ready for a rubber kick. Just pull and kick. The arms get a workout and so do the legs.





most hats

How many hats can you balance on your head? Most people are content with one hat. Not Alice. Alice loves hats. The more hats the better. This passion for hats led to the World Record of Hat Wearing. With the help of several friends and Theater Unlimited's trunk full of hats, Alice managed to pile sixteen hats on her head. Can you match that?







most dressed person in the world

If you like getting dressed with the help of lots of friends, and can't decide which outfit to wear, then this is the activity for you. Just get a bin of fancy clothes and some friends. Then see who can put on the most duds. This is your chance to be, not the best dressed person in the world, but the most dressed person in the world. Start buttoning!

The current record for Most Dressed Person in the World is held by a young woman wearing fifty-six different pieces of clothing.





first cardboard stick-ups

Someone donated a box of cardboard rolls to the center. For several months they sat unused. One afternoon I spilled the box of tubes on the floor and tried a game of pick-up sticks. The idea was a bust. The round shape of the tubes made them vulnerable to the slightest touch. They rolled all over the place, and no one could pick up one tube without setting off an avalanche of cardboard. I was about to put the tubes away when I noticed several participants suspending a tube with their bodies—much like bridge towers supporting a highway span.

I immediately asked everyone to pick up some tubes and try to stick them against someone else's body—to support as many tubes as possible with body pressure. An instant sculpture of bodies and cardboard was formed. Some people actively fixed tubes in place, others moved their bodies to feel and hold the cardboard connectors. This sculpturing was enjoyable and remarkable for its ability to improve "body image." (Often a mentally retarded person has a very poor sense of his or her body's outline. It's as if an internal map is missing. When stuck with cardboard needles, the body was given shape, and its surface was touched and used.)

As for the World Record, The Greatest Number of Cardboard Tubes Supported by a Group of People is seventy-four.







first heart for Macho-Man

I've always enjoyed "Pin the Tail on the Donkey." Now imagine what could happen if the donkey moved. Of course the target would have to give verbal clues to the pursuer. That thinking was the basis for "Pin the Heart on Macho Man."

A cardboard coat was fashioned for Macho Man. The coat indicated that Macho Man lacked a heart. So, blindfolded players were given a tape heart and asked to pin it on a moving Macho Man. This allowed Macho Man to give directions: "Move left." "Come straight ahead." Of course, our Macho Man liked to sing, so the chasers had to listen for Macho Songs and try to pin a singing target.

At the close of our play we discovered Macho Man's disposition did not improve with a chest full of taped hearts—so we gave him wet sponges at twenty yards.







longest walk using inner tube stilts

Walking on rubber stilts is like walking on the moon. Each step must be accompanied by a pull of the inner tube. This pull springs your leg upward, allowing you to step forward. When you force your leg down to a new setting, it bounces on the cushion of air. Yes, rubber stilt walking takes balance and some coordination. The World Record for Longest Walk on Inner Tube Stilts is thirty-eight feet. This record is being contested by the U.S.S.R. Space Program, which claims to have recorded a cosmonaut walking on rubber stilts for a distance of forty-two feet.



most inner tubes lifted by an individual

The World Record for Most Inner Tubes Lifted by an Individual is twenty-seven. Upon completion of this record the individual was completely out of sight. Also out of sight were those friends who lifted and pushed the tubes into appropriate perches and places of balance.

No, this book is not sponsored by Firestone, Goodyear, or Goodblimp. The local tire store was quite helpful in providing the tubes, however, and the corner Shell station did patching for free.







most inner tubes lifted by a group

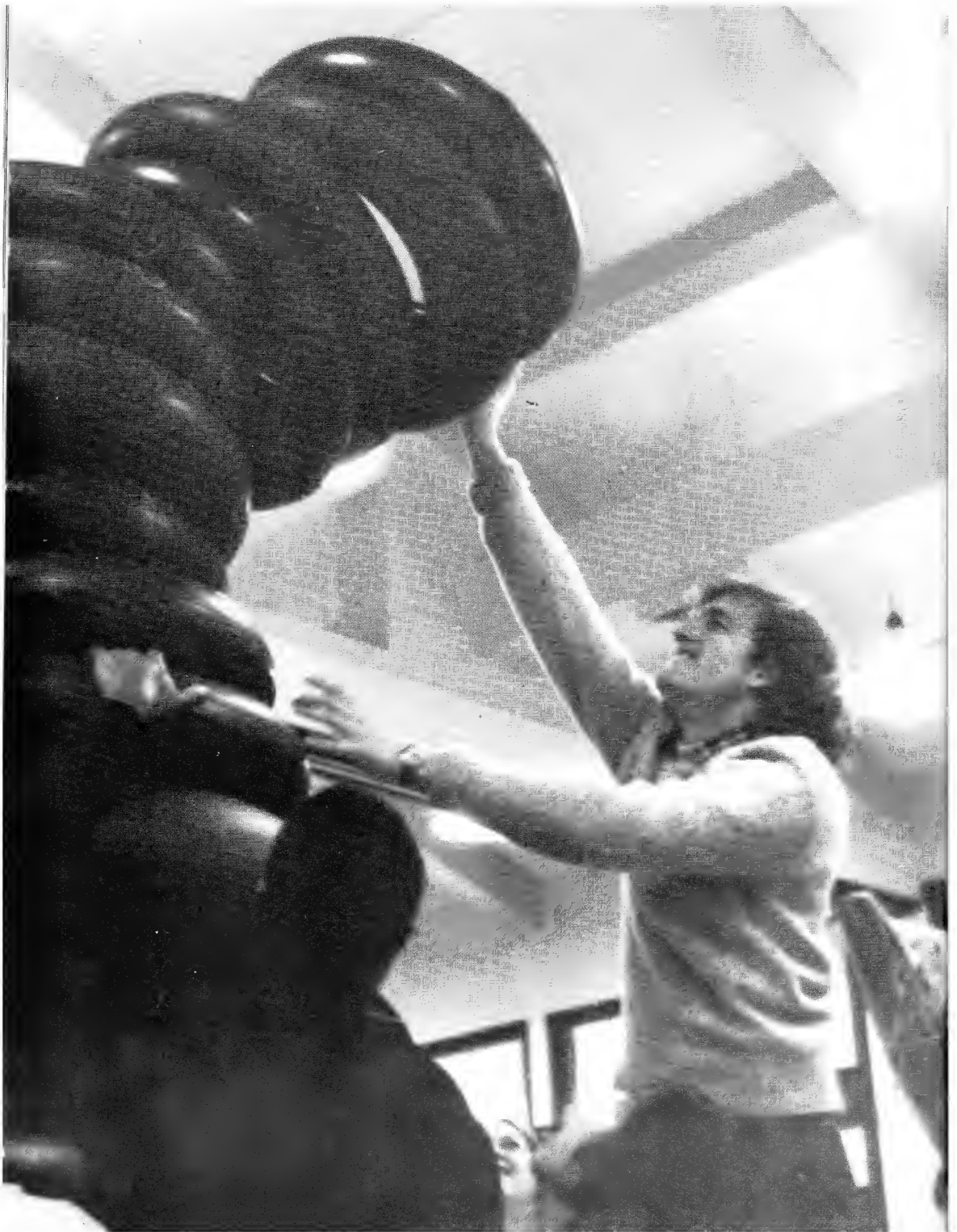
The World Record for Greatest Number of Inner Tubes Lifted by a Group of People is thirty-four. To perform this feat you need "lifters" capable of working together to hold the inner tubes in a flat plane and "pilers" capable of gently stacking the tubes. It also helps to have a handy ladder and a cheering section.





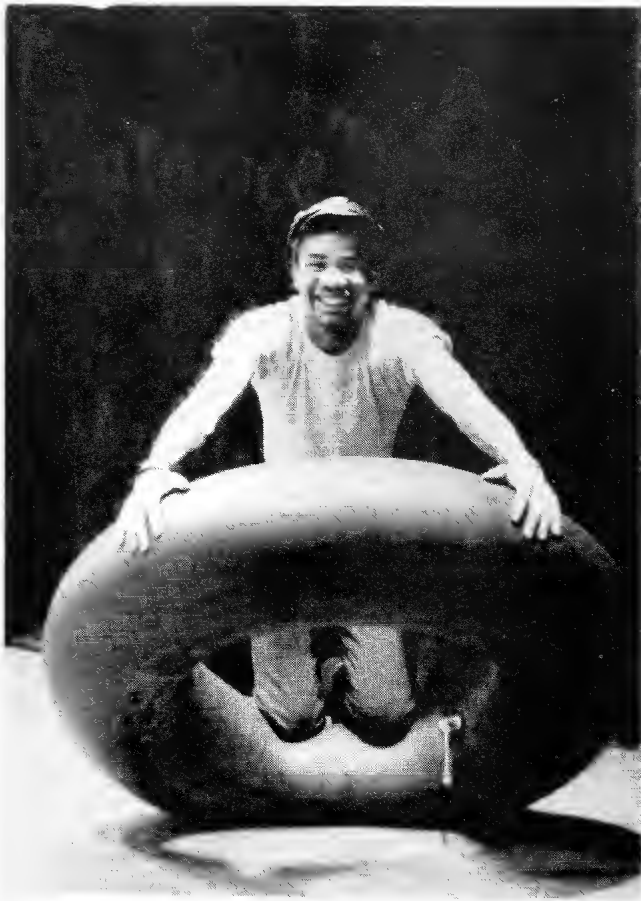








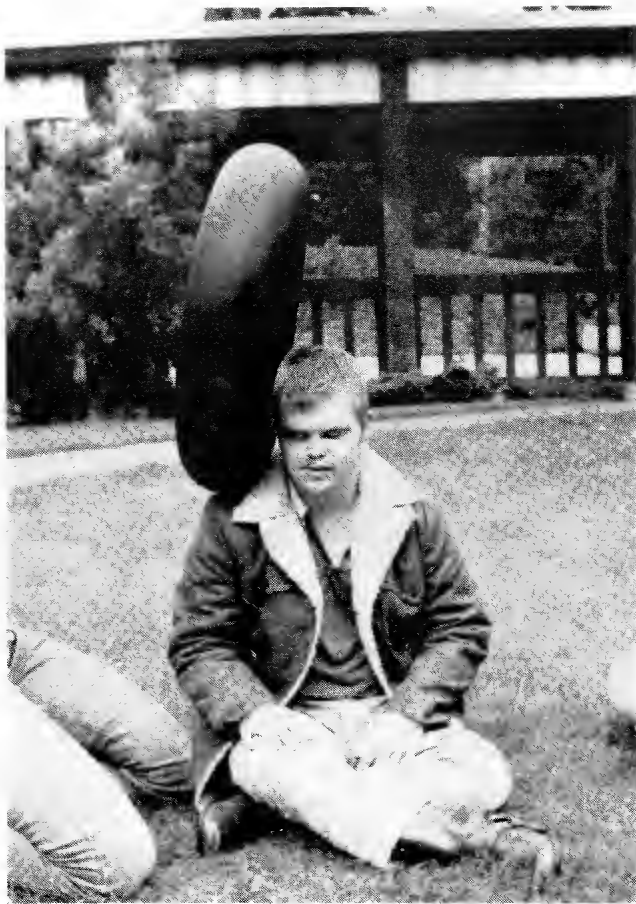




longest "belly balance" and other acts of tube floating

Have you ever tried Tube Floating? Tube Floating is the act of balancing on large inner tubes. Oh, there are lots of ways to balance on an inner tube. There is the famous Knee Balance for those who use their upper body to keep from touching the floor. And there is the Rodeo Balance, which requires the rider to use the hips to maintain balance. And there's the Belly Balance for those who prefer to use their whole body. And, of course, the One Foot Balance for future ballet performers. All are challenging and lots of fun. As for how long one can remain in a balanced position—I'm not sure that really matters. It's getting the feeling of balance that counts.





strangest balance of an inner tube

Can you balance an inner tube on your nose? On your toes? On one foot? On your shoulder? Or on the top of your head? Or back? Stomach? One finger? Or Heel?

If you can balance a tube in one or all of the above postures for thirty seconds, then you've done it. You are the World Record Holder. Congratulations!

Now that you are a World Record Holder, how about finding a friend and trying to duplicate your feats with a partner. Surely if one person can balance a tube on the top of his head, then adding one more head should make things easier. Or will it?



first human domino game

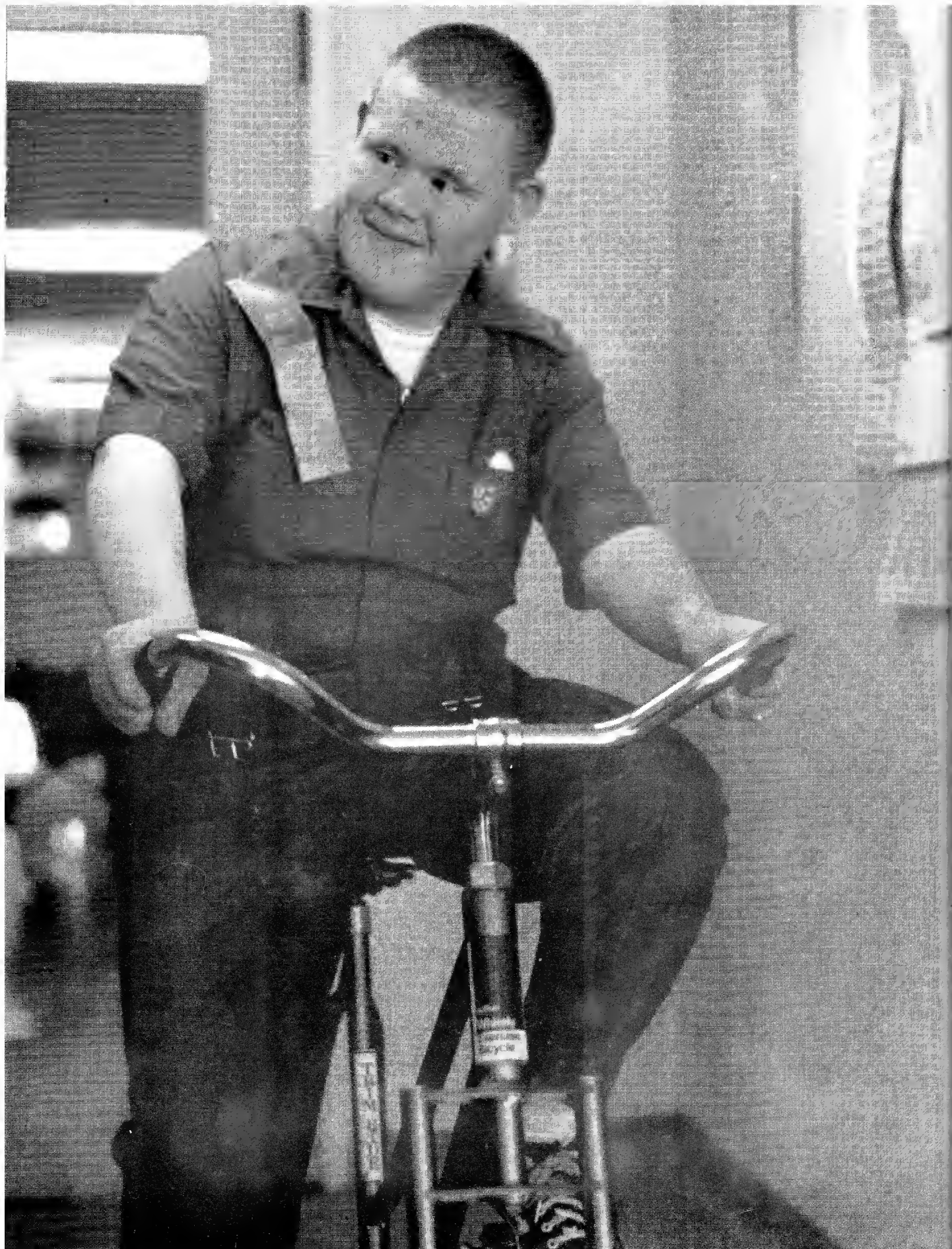
I'm sure you've seen the elaborate set up of dominoes, followed by their collapsing march. Well, consider for a moment what could happen if the dominoes placed so close to one another were not chips of wood but people. Now that's an interesting proposition.

To play Human Dominoes, sit as many people as possible as close as possible in a formation of choice. Then have the human dominoes stiffen. On a signal the lead person can fall backward, setting off a chain reaction of falling bodies. The World Record for the longest human domino chain is 108 people.



Now that you have the idea of falling together, you might try some creative dominoes. Can the group sit up together—lean one way together—lean another way together—stand up together—roll over together? These group moves require a lot of strength and a lot of cooperation.

Perhaps the best group exercise developed during a play session with human dominoes was suggested by Emery Weed. Emery normally works in aquatics, but seeing a developing domino game, he grabbed a place at the end of the line. While I was standing at the front of the line frantically instructing the group about the next stunt, Emery started massaging the neck and back of the person in front of him. And that person began doing the same for the person in front of her. And so on. I couldn't figure out why or how the group suddenly went from hyperactive to relaxed snooze. Then the massage reached the first player who, having no one to reciprocate the back rub, asked me to sit down. I sat—and enjoyed the massage. The World's Longest Domino Set became the World's First and Longest Group Massage.



greatest bicycle ride or San Francisco to New York City (2,995mi.) on an exercycle

The Greatest Bicycle Ride started when someone donated an exercycle to the Center. And someone else delivered it to the lobby of the building instead of to the designated exercise room. So there it sat in the lobby. When I went to claim the exercycle and move it to the proper place, I found the bike surrounded by kids. The biggest kid in the group was riding it as fast as he could. The pedals flew around as all attention was fixed on the odometer and the rolling numbers that indicated a tenth of a mile had been traveled. When the big kid exhausted himself, another biker took up the cause. She sat "low rider" fashion and slowly pedaled a tenth of a mile. The surrounding group of onlookers yelped as the mileage numerals rolled past the tenth mark and showed one mile. Three children and the janitor clamored to be next.

I watched as turns were taken and given. The sound of wheels turning and riders proclaiming how fast they were riding and how far they had pedaled attracted the attention of everyone at the Center. Participants, staff members, volunteers, office workers, and even visitors could not avoid the bicycle in the lobby. Each rider brought a different reason





for turning the pedals. Some wanted to lose weight. Others enjoyed a little exercise. Or watching the wheels spin. Two unlikely bike enthusiasts, Violet and Lena, gave the bike ride a purpose that all who rode the bike could share and enjoy.

Now Violet and Lena were no spring chickens. Violet had worked at the Center for over twenty years. And those twenty years had come after retirement as a hostess for Arthur Murray Dance Studios. Violet was the Center's receptionist. She answered the phone and questions about anybody or anything. Her warmth and spirit were like the lighting on a Christmas tree. She made everyone feel glad to be alive and kicking.

If Violet was the twinkle of the Center, then Lena was the popcorn trimming. Together, and they were always together, they looked like a comedy team. Violet with her tall, skinny manner, polished with

rouge cheeks and pencil-thin eyebrows. Lena with her shorter-than-short body dressed in that homemade look. Yes, you could say they were old, in their seventies, but you could never say those two lacked gumption. Or surprises. Or love for all those around them. But wait a minute, let's get back to the bicycle.

Violet thought the bicycle was "the cat's meow." She immediately measured the machine, threw one leg over the seat, and began to pedal. In doing so, she gave the bike not only a rider, but a destiny. "This is the best thing in the world for us sit-down girls, why I can visualize myself riding clear across the country on this thing." Violet had the talent for pedaling and talking at the same time. Each turn of the spokes led to a new thought. "Just close my eyes and I'm riding across the Golden Gate Bridge. Nope, I think I'd rather be riding east. How far is it to New York City? I once rode a bike through Kansas, you know!" It was through Violet's imagination that the Great Bike Ride was born.

I got a huge map of the United States and taped it to the wall behind the exercycle. Then each day I recorded how far we had pedaled, and marked that distance in a dotted line that inched from San Francisco toward New York City. And to make Violet happy, I got travel posters from the places that we were pedaling through. The scenery matched the mileage on the odometer.

If Violet gave the bike ride a destination, it was Lena who gave the ride its purpose. Lena, you see, like so many people at the Center, had never ridden a bicycle. "You know, Ron, I just never rode a bicycle. Always wanted to, but never did." And there was Violet riding and singing away. Well, the sight of Violet and the presence of the bicycle got to Lena. She asked if I would help her get on the exercycle. I tried to lift her onto the seat, but she was heavy and ticklish. Then I tried having her step on the pedal



with one leg and swing the other over, but her legs were too short. She couldn't make the swing.

The final solution was out of King Arthur's Court. Actually, it was Violet's idea, but Lena wouldn't allow Violet to watch her try. The idea was simple. I would stoop on all fours, making a kind of "human step." Then Lena would stand on my back and from that perch swing her leg over the seat. She swung her leg for all she was worth and landed square on the seat. That's when the real trouble began.

Her feet barely touched the pedals, and when she dipped to one side to tap a pedal it would spin full circle and kick her off balance. Lena was now perspiring and talking to fight off the confusion and embarrassment. "Now hold me, you sure you got a hold. Oh my God, my dress, now I know why I never rode one of these



things." I was now standing in front of the seated Lena trying to hold her on the seat by grasping her hands. We swayed back and forth each time a pedal kicked her or she veered sideways for balance. The fear of falling showed on her face. It was white and puffy. And her hands held mine like a wrench. "Come on," I ordered, "You have to move your hands to the handle grips, that's it." She didn't hear me. She was busy talking to herself. "How am I doing, is anything happening, this is indecent, me up here, don't tell Steve about this, am I doing all right?"

Each time her leg came up on a pedal the edge of her dress would shift up her leg, causing an immediate effort to hold the hem line at her knee. With each rotation of the pedal I thought she might go crashing off the bike. Each time her dress moved she would yank a hand from the handlebar and pull at the dress. I was playing catch with her free hand, trying desperately to keep her pinned to the bike. Feeling her anxiousness about her dress, I was also trying to look away and hold her hand and get ready to catch her. if only I could figure out to which side she was going to fall!

"Am I doing it?" she asked painfully. "Yes," I answered, "whatever you do—don't stop! And don't worry about your dress, no one is looking—try to keep your hands on the bar! That's good!" Lena had pedaled perhaps a dozen turns of the wheel. Her hands were now planted on the rubber grips and the pedal crank came to a stop without kicking her off the seat. Lena had had her first bicycle ride. I was sure it would be her last.

I helped Lena get off the bike. Her body was shaking. She was dripping with sweat and anticipation. "Wait till I tell that Violet, she thinks she's the only one around here that can do anything. You know, I'm going to have to wear me some slacks to work tomorrow. Never worn slacks to work before, but you can't ride a bike and not wear slacks."



I thought this was all bravado for getting off the bike. But the next day Lena was wearing slacks. And asking for help to get on the bike. She rode a tenth of a mile. After a week she was riding a mile each day. And then two miles a day. I don't know what she enjoyed more. Riding the bike, wearing slacks, or keeping up with Violet. Perhaps it was "all of the above."

The lady in slacks became the instructor in our Ride Across the Country. She showed some of the children how to use rubber bands to hold their feet on the pedals. And encouraged some of the older participants to try out the bike. Of course she had some tricks—like riding with both hands off the handle bars. And she had lots of determination to see to it that we could ride from San Francisco to New York City.

The average mileage recorded in a day was twenty-three miles. This is amazing when you consider that most riders, like Lena, had to struggle just to balance on the bike. And some riders, notably Roy Cook, pedaled backwards, which literally erased miles of travel. And many riders

had to be content with moving the pedals not with their feet but with the circular motion of their hands. Whenever our enthusiasm would slacken, Lena would be up on the bike churning out a mile.

The greatest problem in making the 3000 mile ride was not the riders but the bike. The exercycle was not made for marathon rides. At 800 miles and two months of pedaling the wheel of the bike simply wore out. It was patched just in time for continued traumas of bolt popping, chain slipping, and wheel wobbling.

Lena would not be denied. She found replacement bikes and parts. The trip was a yardstick upon which we all would be measured. And Lena had decided we'd make it.

Nine months after we started, Lena pedaled the last mile into New York City. The lady in slacks had done it. All told, 123 people had contributed to the ride. Together they had ridden a stationary bicycle a distance of 3000 miles. Upon the completion of the ride, Violet had a suggestion, "Well, that was good, now let's ride back!"





longest stretch

Monday evening, January 21, 1980, I placed a pile of bicycle inner tubes on the floor of the main hall at the San Francisco Recreation Center for the Handicapped. Members of Theatre Unlimited assembled at my request. I asked them to invent some ways to play with these tubular snakes. I offered no instruction or questions, or examples of play. The accompanying photographs record what happened.

If I were to attach words to these actions, I would suggest that cooperative play is the result of testing ideas. This testing requires a willingness to tinker—try all manner of approaches and adventures. Testing also requires some amount of trust. Trust in yourself, that what you try is only silly for a minute—or could fail altogether—or lead to some unexpected discovery. Testing also requires a sensitivity to your exploration. As you engage your idea, are people around you laughing, crying, leaving, joining, or covering their eyes in fright? And can you be brave enough to see what others are trying and work with them to make their idea better. Or sensible enough to challenge an idea that hurts others. Even if that idea is yours. And strong enough to share your idea should it be useful and attractive to others. That's the secret of a Shared Victory: the will to play and win together, and then decide to play again.







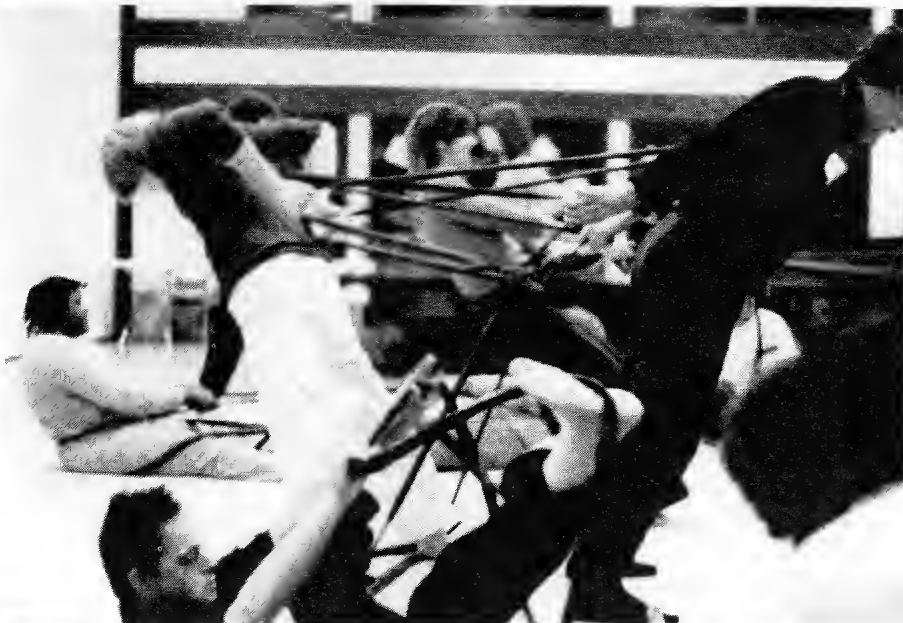


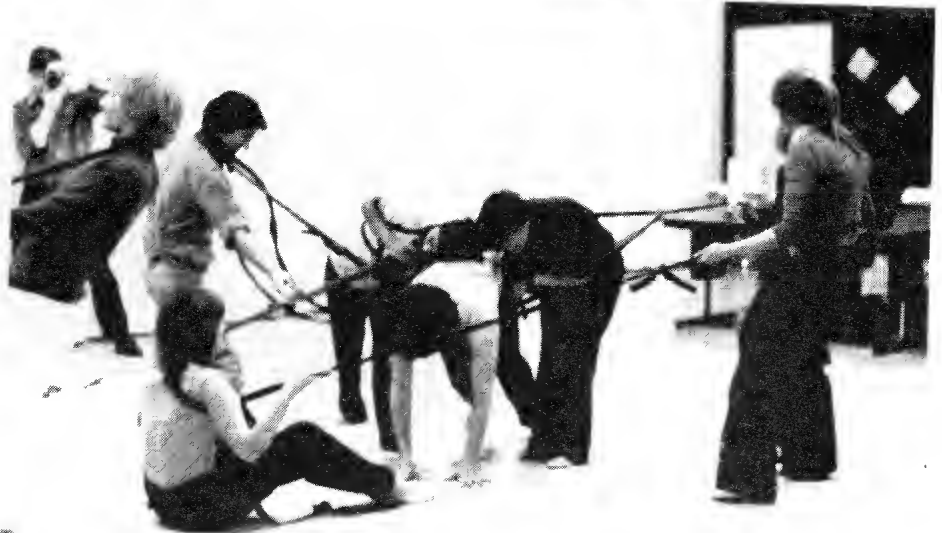


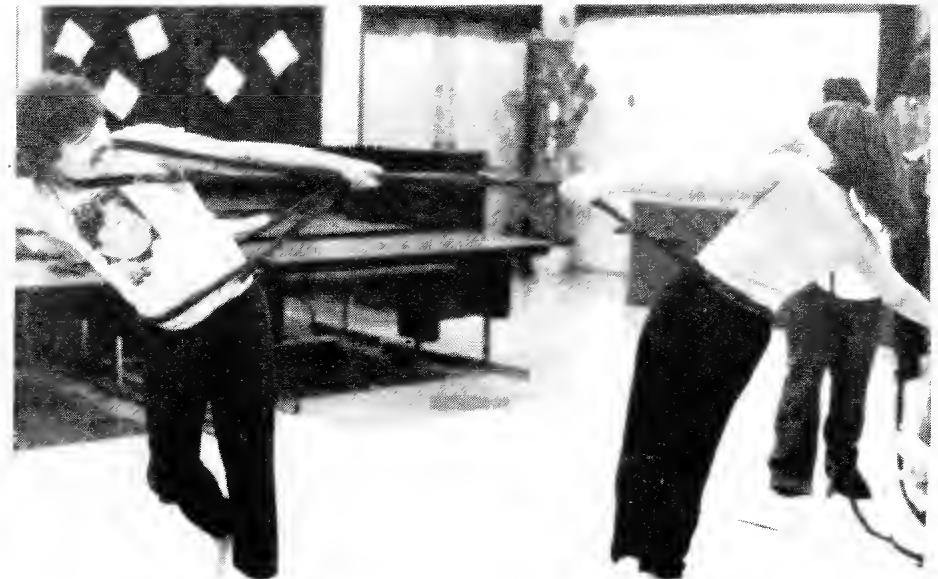














shared
victory